

March 8, 2010

Testimony of Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

Raised Bill	Support/ Oppose
S.B. 207: AN ACT CONCERNING RECENT INCREASES IN HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES AND AMENDING CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLE FINES	Support

Co-Chairmen Roy, Meyer, and Members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Eric Hammerling and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, the first conservation organization established in Connecticut in 1895. CFPA has offered testimony before the Legislature on issues such as sustainable forestry, state parks and forests, trail recreation, natural resource protection, and land conservation every year since 1897.

Although I am unable to join you at the hearing today, I want to thank the Committee for raising S.B. 207, AN ACT CONCERNING RECENT INCREASES IN HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES AND AMENDING CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLE FINES. We share the concerns of the hunters, anglers, and many other recreational users who on October 1, 2009 saw the fees double or increase dramatically for approximately 150 permits, fees, and professional licenses administered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Although we understand the need for the state to raise revenues to meet the demands of a challenging fiscal climate, we are disappointed that this was done at the expense of those who are most closely connected to the land and those who may not have the resources to enjoy our state's tremendous outdoor recreational resources.

Although we support this bill and see the value of proposing offsets for fees to be reduced to more reasonable increases, we propose two additional elements that we hope will be considered:

- 1) We wish the scope of the bill was broader to include other fees that were doubled. Specifically, we would like to see State park and forest admissions, parking, and camping fee increases limited to a similar twenty to twenty-five percent increase over the fee levels that were in effect before October 1, 2009; and
- 2) We would like to ensure that the fees collected from citizens for hunting, fishing, and park/forest purposes are targeted toward supporting the wildlife management and park management programs of the CT DEP rather than going to the General Fund.

Thank you for raising this bill and for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of CFPA.